



A Guide to Transforming Faith Formation for a New World

John Roberto

Additional resources at: www.LifelongFaith.com and <https://vibrant-faith-catalyst.mn.co>

Part 1. Understanding How Our World Has Changed

We have all been witnesses to a world that has been dramatically changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. No aspect of life has been unaffected. We have been witnesses to and agents in the abrupt move of church life from the physical to the virtual with streaming Sunday worship, faith formation into online platforms, connection with each other via social media, meetings via video conferencing, online conferences and webinars, and much more.

We are growing in the realization that the impact of the pandemic will not be a short term experience. We know that re-opening our buildings for Sunday worship requires great care and planning. We know that gathering people in medium or large groups may not be possible or safe in the short term, and that the largest group that can be reliably gathered in-person for meetings and formation may only be about ten people.

We are wondering what the world be like after this first outbreak of Covid-19? What will the next year or two look like? How will churches respond to this new environment? How will churches design ministries and faith formation in this changed world? So many questions. So many uncertainties.

Blizzard, Winter, and Ice Age

How you and your church view the pandemic and the uncertainties that are emerging will shape your response—short term and long term. In “Leading Beyond the Blizzard” Andy Crouch, Kurt Keilhacker, and Dave Blanchard analyze three responses to the pandemic through the images of blizzard, winter, and ice age.

In a **Blizzard** we can’t go out—zero visibility and hostile conditions. We need to shelter. In a Blizzard “we acknowledge that things are very difficult, provide emotional and practical support for immediate needs, and urge people to take extraordinary measures that not only would be unthinkable in ordinary times, but are unsustainable for long periods of time. If the crisis

generated by COVID-19 is a blizzard, it will be over soon, we will all emerge from our shelter, and resume life roughly the way it was before. Our job in a blizzard is to wait it out.”

In **Winter** we can go out, but not for long. We need to wear protective clothing and check the forecast for storms. We need to survive. “Winter might begin with a blizzard, but it is a season lasting months, not a single event. In cold climates, winter means that periodic acute events (blizzards) punctuate a continuous period in which human activity must adapt to bitterly inhospitable conditions. This is almost certainly the reality of COVID-19 in the United States and many other countries. This will not be an event lasting a few weeks.”

In an **Ice Age** things don’t grow the way they used to, but we’re finding new ways to live and even to thrive. We need to adapt and rebuild. “The metaphor is obvious. Just as winter is more chronic and long-lasting than a blizzard, and requires different sorts of adaptation, which are in many ways more far-reaching than merely hunkering down for a few days or weeks—so there are even larger-scale events that reshape the climate through countless successive seasons. A generally accepted timeframe for the wide deployment of an effective vaccine—though there are huge uncertainties here—is 18 months. But 18 months is not a season — it is, for many purposes, more like an age or an era.” In this little ice age life will be disrupted in significant ways for a longer period of time.”

We need to acknowledge that ***we are not going back to normal!*** It seems increasingly clear that coronavirus pandemic is not just something to “get through” for a few days or weeks. Instead, is an economic, cultural, political, and religious blizzard, winter, and beginning of a “little ice age” — a once-in-a-lifetime change that is likely to affect our lives, societies, and religious congregations for years.

We should plan to ***survive the winter by building for the ice age***—to do all that is necessary to sustain our core mission of making disciple and nurturing faith for a lifetime; to prototype new projects in faith formation that will lead toward a different future; and in all things to increase the trust and reputation of our church community. It’s time to redesign our work for the beginning of an “ice age” that will last into 2022 and beyond.

Crouch, Keilhacker, and Blanchard offer these reflections for leaders.

This time poses the greatest leadership crisis any of us have faced. It can be a moment of amazing creativity, though it also is going to be a time of unavoidable pain and loss. We will discover that while many resources are suddenly unavailable to us, the most essential resource is still available, and the most important reality has not changed. The reality is that God has called us to a time like this, given us a mission and a community to serve alongside, and we still have the most important resource, which is trust in the context of love. Everything depends on how quickly and thoroughly we move to build on that resource, starting today.

How do you and your church see the pandemic—blizzard, winter, or ice age—and what will that mean for developing plans and strategies for formation with age groups, families, and the whole community (intergenerational)?

Transferring, Translating, and Transforming

Heidi Campbell, in “Distancing Religion Online: Lessons from the Pandemic Prompted Religious Move Online,” reflects on the challenges and opportunities that face religious communities and their leaders as they move from traditional in-person forms of communal gathering to online forms. She identifies three strategies churches employed for moving worship online: **transferring**, **translating**, and **transforming**. Each of these strategies also describe the move of faith formation programming from physical spaces to online spaces.

Transferring: The *transfer* or broadcast approach attempts to replicate the traditional service online as closely as possible. Here most churches set up a single camera in the center of an empty sanctuary and attempt to get a wide angle shot of a service conducted as if it were any other gathering.

Translating: Other church leaders focused on *translating* and adapting certain elements of their traditional in-person services, such as communal singing or liturgical readings, into a space constrained by camera angles or the screen dimensions of the streaming platform.

Transforming: In this approach, religious leaders reflected both on what new forms of gathering digital technology could facilitate, as well as on the needs voiced by their members for online experiences that would help support and build community. Transforming worship online looked like a pastor turning his home study into a space where he could give nightly “fireside chats” to his church, responding to the issues people had voiced to him that day via phone calls, emails, and texts. It also looked like a minister in England using her blog to get people to participate in a group conversation about the themes to be addressed in her sermon, integrating their responses, photos, and artwork into the actual service.

I argue that this moment, when churches are forced to abandon old models and reimagine church in new ways, creates a unique opportunity for religious communities to reflect on the needs of people in contemporary society. The COVID-19 pandemic offers an important moment for religious institutions to re-evaluate whether or not their models of ministry truly meet people’s desires for community and connection with others.

This global pandemic calls into question religious group’s dependence on older models of community and religious commitment. It also amplifies the need for awareness that religious communities now function on a network model, a fact made visible by offering mediated online interactions and gatherings. Being forced from offline religion to online religion requires religious communities to reconsider what it means to truly practice and live out community and their faith. Recognizing this moment will help religious groups not only create viable worship-based social distancing strategies. It will allow them to consider the changes that are in store for them as they play catch-up to these societal changes, and seek to prepare for a post-pandemic future for religion.

How did your church move faith formation online: transferring, translating, or transforming?

Three Conclusions

The pandemic has had an impact on everything churches do. We now have to ask questions and the where, when, what, and how of church life that were unthinkable before March 2020: Sunday worship, large group gatherings at church, intergenerational and/or family faith formation gatherings at church, children's classes, youth meetings, ritual celebrations (baptisms, first communions, confirmations), retreats mission trips, and much more.

The pandemic has demonstrated how fragile faith formation approaches and programming were and how dependent they were on fixed time programming in physical spaces at church facilities and in the other locations (retreat houses, service/mission project locations, etc.) When gatherings at church were no longer possible, faith formation in many places just came to a halt. The pandemic has called into question how durable and resilient our current forms of ministry and faith formation really are.

Based on the available data, I believe that we can make at least the three conclusions about our current situation.

First, there is no going back to life before the pandemic or to church life and faith formation before the pandemic. All of the evidence is pretty clear that our world and church have been disrupted in significant and lasting ways. We are going to have to develop new models and approaches for church life and faith formation if we are going to survive and thrive in this new world.

Second, we have moved through "winter" and are now entering into multiple years of an "ice age." Based on the most optimistic forecasts the earliest a vaccine might be ready is early 2021 with production and widespread availability of the vaccine many months later. We need to design a new approach to faith formation beginning in Fall 2020 that takes this timeline as a starting point.

Third, we will not be able to gather people in church facilities as we have in the past. If we use the Center for Disease Control guidelines for public gatherings, the picture becomes pretty clear. Most parts of the U.S. are in Phase 1 or 2; very few are in Phase 3. And the movement from Phase 1 to 2 to 3 is a gradual process.

- *Phase 1 of Gathering:* church activities limited to 10 people or fewer, plus physical distancing (6'), and increased cleaning and sanitizing (and in most locations across the U.S. people are being asked/required to wear masks in public).
- *Phase 2 of Gathering:* 50 people or fewer, physical distancing (6'), and increased cleaning and sanitizing (and in most locations across the U.S. people are being asked/required to wear masks in public).
- *Phase 3 of Gathering:* More than 50 people and increased cleaning and sanitizing (and in most locations across the U.S. people are being asked/required to wear masks in public).

So how do we envision and plan Faith Formation 2.0?

Part 2. Envisioning and Innovating: Faith Formation 2.0

Mimi Larson, in “How Your Children’s Ministry Can Emerge Stronger and Better After COVID-19,” describes the challenge ahead in this way:

In these past weeks, we have all worked hard to pivot, recreating our face-to-face ministries either online or in other creative ways. But we will not be going back to the same world—we will emerge from this pandemic in a world that has been profoundly changed.

As Les McKeown states, it’s not enough to *pivot*. Pivoting involves keeping your eyes on what you have been doing. Instead, we should be embracing *innovation*, looking toward the future and imagining new ways of doing ministry. It is critical that children’s ministry leaders move from a pivot mindset to an innovation mindset, asking questions like these:

- What would it look like to rethink how children (people of all ages) grow in faith?
- What might a home-based discipleship ministry look like?
- How might your church embrace intergenerational worship and ministry?

Yes, these innovative ideas require some thought. They also require creativity and risk. But don’t be afraid. We have been given a significant opportunity. Rarely do we get the time and space in ministry to dream. Asking “What if...?” can open up all kinds of creative possibilities.

Designing **Faith Formation 2.0** means building more resilient, flexible, and adaptable forms of faith formation with age groups, families, and the whole community (intergenerational) that are developed in response to the new conditions of the post-Covid-19 world.

Here are five important building blocks for designing Faith Formation 2.0.

1. Focus on goals for faith maturing at each stage of life and design programming to address the goals.
2. Integrate three faith forming environments: intergenerational community, family, and age or peer group in all programming.
3. Design faith formation in three seasonal menus of programming.
4. Design faith formation using online and blended approaches, eventually incorporating programming in physical settings when conditions allow.
5. Design playlists of faith forming content and experiences for all ages to structure faith formation programming.

#1. Focus on goals for faith maturing at each stage of life.

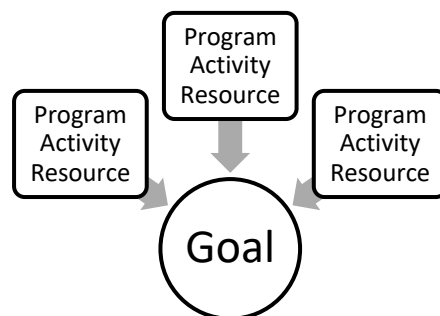
Faith Formation 2.0 shifts the emphasis from a focus on activities, classes, courses, and programs to a focus on *goals for maturing in faith*. This change of focus reflects a significant shift from a provider-centered, program- and content-driven approach to a *person-centered* approach to faith formation. Faith formation focuses on goals for faith maturing, at each stage of life, and selects the content, experiences, programs, and methods that will promote growth in faith and discipleship.

The following ten goal incorporate knowing and believing, relating and belonging, practicing and living. They are drawn from the Christian faith tradition and from research on what makes a difference in forming faith in people's lives across they life span. These ten goals are a starting point. They need to be contextualized within a specific Christian tradition, the identity and mission of a church, and the unique social, cultural, and ethnic make-up of the community.

Goals for Maturing in Faith

1. Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ.
2. Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life.
3. Reading and studying the Bible, and its message, meaning, and application to life today.
4. Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of one's particular Christian faith tradition and integrating its meaning into one's life.
5. Praying—together and by ourselves—and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual practices and disciplines.
6. Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values.
7. Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace—locally and globally.
8. Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship and ritual celebrations, and through the seasons of the church year.
9. Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community.
10. Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one's gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world

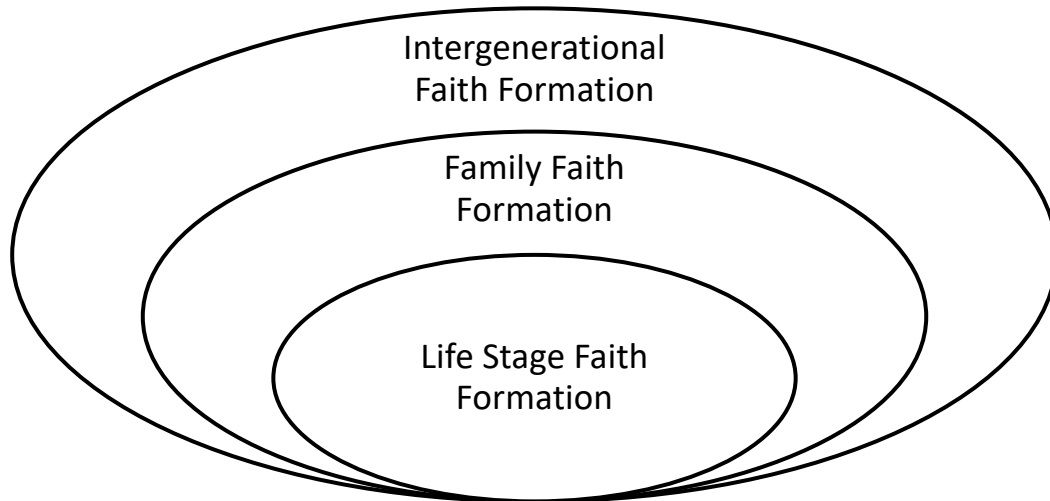
Shifting the emphasis from a program- driven faith formation to a goal-centered faith formation opens up multiple ways (activities, methods, programs) to promote faith maturing through developmentally-appropriate faith forming experiences at each stage of life.



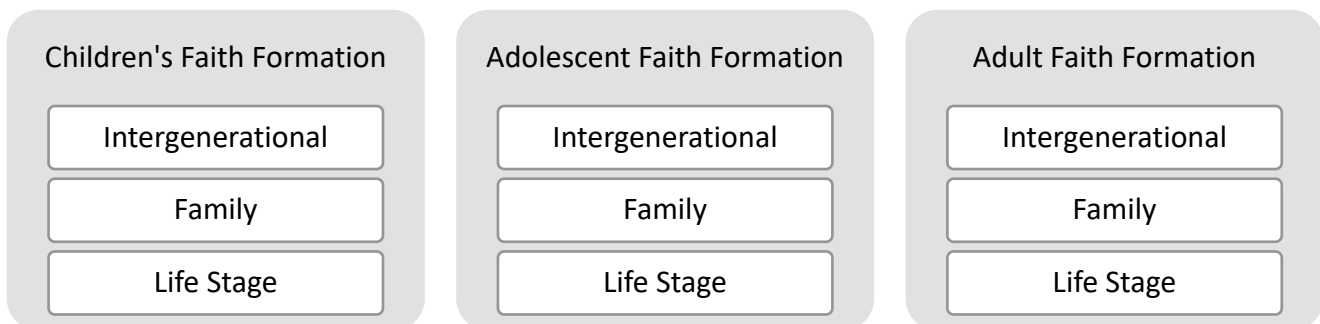
What are your church's goals for maturing in faith and discipleship?

#2. Integrate three faith forming environments: intergenerational church community, family, and age or peer group.

Faith Formation 2.0 is holistic, integrating three primary environments: the intergenerational church community, the family, and the age group/peer group. This holistic approach promotes maturing in faith by engaging all ages in *intergenerational* relationships, activities, and church life and events (including Sunday worship), equipping and supporting *parents* and the whole *family* in sharing and practicing their faith at home, and engaging *each life stage* in activities and experiences designed to address their religious and spiritual journeys, life stage needs, and the ways they learn and grow.



Children, adolescents, and adults need to experience the faith forming influence of all three environments each year. Faith formation at each stage of life blends intergenerational, family, and age group settings into a holistic approach to faith formation. This reflects a significant shift from the age-segregated or siloed approach where faith formation with children, adolescents, and adults is primarily age-group-only without significant intergenerational and family faith forming experiences. This shift situates people within a broader “ecology” of faith formation and a more holistic approach to faith formation.



How can you integrate all three environments in faith formation at each stage of life?

#3. Design faith formation in three seasonal menus of programming.

Faith Formation 2.0 is designed in seasons of programming: September-December, January-April, May-August. With the rapidly changing environment it is wise to create seasonal plans, rather than an annual plan. Even before the pandemic a seasonal approach adjusts better to the needs, schedules, and interests of people in the faith community.

You can create a blueprint for the whole year, but it is wiser and simpler to manage one season of programming at a time. Over the course of a year (three seasons) content and programming can be added so that the complete plan is fully implemented by the third season. Some of the programming will be consistent in every season, while other programming will be specific to a season.

A seasonal approach allows you to be more nimble and flexible in adjusting to the environment and the changing needs, schedules, and interests of people. A seasonal approach also allows you to pilot new initiatives and programs in one season and then expand them in the next season.

The goal of a seasonal plan is to provide holistic faith formation that integrates a variety of faith forming experiences – intergenerational (including whole church experiences), family-centered at church and home, and age-group or peer activities – in online, blended, and physical settings.

The “menu” approach to faith formation provides a way for people to select from a variety of programs and activities and create their own plan for faith formation. This learner-centered approach gives people control over what and when and where they will participate.

For children and adolescents (and their parents), churches can develop expectations for their participation. These expectations can be developed around the different types of programming or the ten goals of faith maturing. One way to do this is to have children (and their parents) and adolescents select programming from categories such as:

- Know - Informing: Knowing and understanding more fully the Christian faith
- Grow - Forming: Developing and deepening their relationship with Jesus and the Christian community
- Live - Transforming: Living the Christian faith in every aspect of their lives

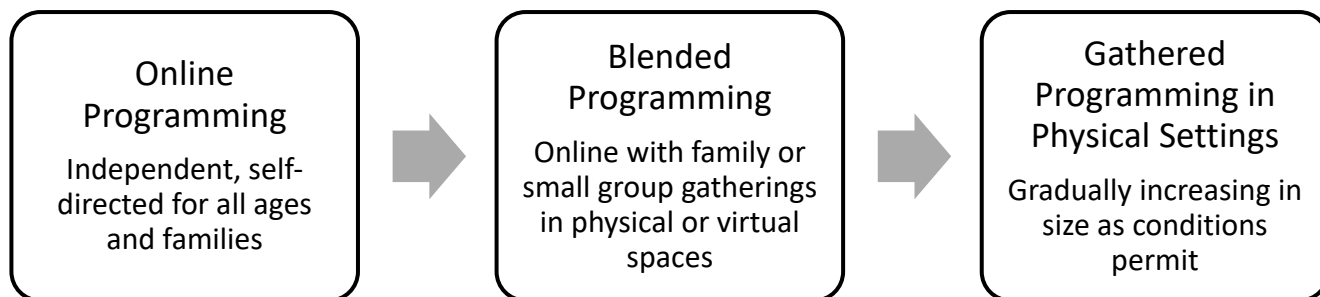
Westwood Lutheran Church in Minneapolis uses a menu approach to confirmation by blending “know”—hands on learning, “live”—service to our neighbor and congregation, and “grow”—fellowship and faith nurturing experiences. They organized the menu similar to a college program by asking the young people to take a minimum of three courses (in a variety of formats—one-day to multiple sessions) in each of the three categories. Over three years young people take 17 credits: four in each of the three categories are required; the remaining five credits are electives. (Go to <http://www.westwoodlutheran.org/Westwood-U> for what they are doing currently)

A second way is to develop a “credits” approach (create expectations and goals) around participation in Sunday worship, intergenerational gatherings, church year seasonal celebrations, service projects,

family at-home projects, age-specific programs (classes, summer program, vacation Bible school), and more. This is especially good for churches who have limited leadership. Participants can follow a plan of exposure to all aspects of a congregation's offerings and then engage with the pastor, faith formation coordinator, or a mentor to explore identity formation and learn to develop their own voice.

#4. Design faith formation using online and blended approaches, eventually incorporating programming in physical settings when conditions allow.

Faith Formation 2.0 is designed first in online spaces with options for blended formation that combines online and physical spaces (in small groups), and then eventually physical gatherings can be incorporated into the programming mix when conditions allow. We can become much more strategic and careful about when, where, how, and for what we gather people because we will be using all three programming models—online, blended, and gathered.



Faith formation programming can be **synchronous (real time programming)** and **asynchronous (on your own time)**. Both are essential for designing online and blended programming. We can deliver synchronous online programming with live streaming, video conferencing, and online courses. We need online learning platforms, websites, and more for asynchronous learning.

You will need a few **digital tools** to make online programming effective. You don't need expensive or complex technology to implement online faith formation. The "Guide to Digital Tools" at the end of this document describes each of these tools with web links.

- **A Website:** To create faith formation website use a drag-and-drop website builder like Weebly, Wix, or Squarespace that doesn't demand HTML programming skills.
- **Video Conferencing and Streaming:** To convene online groups you can use Zoom or Google Meet. To live stream programs and presentations you can use Zoom, Facebook Live, or YouTube Live.
- **Online Learning Platform (Learning Management System):** To create an online "classroom" for sharing content, texts, videos, projects, and interacting with each other use Edmodo or Google Classroom.
- **Facebook Groups:** To incorporate an interactive environment for online programs and blended programs use Facebook Groups.

- **E-Newsletter:** To create a weekly e-newsletter to communicate the faith formation activities and schedules for the week or month use MailChimp, Constant Contact, or Flocknote.
- **Texting:** To send reminders, links to activities on the faith formation website, and short activities (prayer, Bible verse, etc.) using a texting app like GroupMe, Telegram), WhatsApp, or Viber.
- **Social Media:** To communicate and share faith forming content, and to invite people to share what they are learning and doing through videos, images, and text use social media platforms, like Facebook and Instagram.

For information about these digital tools go to the **Tools** section on www.LifelongFaith.com.

Examples of Online and Blended Programming

1. Fully Online Programming (asynchronous)

Develop self-directed, independent faith formation using the abundance of online programs and resources for all ages, but especially adults. Curate courses and resources from seminaries, universities, and Christian publishers and organizations. Use a thematic approach (e.g., ten goals for maturing in faith) to organize playlists or webpages with self-directed learning topics like Scripture, prayer and spiritual formation, social justice issues, theological themes, morality and ethics, and much more.

2. Blended Programming (both asynchronous and synchronous)

Develop blended learning programming which integrates learning in gathered settings (usually physical locations but now also in online groups using Zoom) and online settings where a person has some control over time, place, path, and/or pace of the learning experience. One form of blended learning is “flipped learning” in which the content moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space online, and the group space is transformed into an interactive learning environment for discussion and application.

Design programming for groups that involves online self-directed activities and group meetings (on Zoom or Google Meet, or in a physical setting with less than 10 people). For example, a six-session Bible study or book group or course can include individual work and meeting two or three times in a group setting.

Redesign children classes and youth courses/programs that have been offered in a physical space into a blended program with live streamed presentations, virtual meetings, and online learning.

Design programs in mini-course format—short form programming of 3 or 4 sessions that incorporates live streaming and video conferencing for discussion with each session designed as a playlist of faith forming activities for self-study.

3. Live Streamed Programming (synchronous with asynchronous activities)

Use live streaming to bring the program content directly to people in real time to people. Use live streaming for individual presentations, for example a monthly webinar just for parents, or a theological presentation for adults.

Design programming with live streaming incorporated into the program design along with small group or at home faith formation. For example a live stream of theology presentation for adults can be followed with small group discussions on Zoom or in a Facebook Group.

A children, youth, or family program could be designed or redesigned to blend live streaming with a home activity. The live stream presentation/demonstration can be modeled on a cooking show with input, examples, and how-to demonstrations. The at-home activities would be on the faith formation website and designed as a playlist for the month.

The first two examples present a monthly plan for faith formation; the third an extended time program or vacation Bible school. You could easily imagine the third option as an extended program or retreat for youth or adults. There are lots of options for integrating live streaming with at home activities into a complete program.

Example 1 – Monthly Plan with Two Live Stream Presentations

- Week 1 Live stream presentation and/or demonstration #1
- Week 2 Learning at home and sharing reflections/projects online
- Week 3 Live stream presentation and/or demonstration #2
- Week 4 Learning at home and sharing reflections/projects online

Example 2 – Monthly Plan with One Live Stream Presentation

- Week 1 Live stream presentation and /or demonstration
- Week 2 Learning at home
- Week 3 Creating a project
- Week 4 Sharing a project or reflections on the experience

Example 3 – Extended Time Program

- Opening Introduction to the program, prayer (song, video)
- Hour 1 Presentation/demonstration #1 via live stream (20 minutes)
Home activity and break
- Hour 2 Presentation/demonstration #2 via live stream
Home activity and break
- Hour 3 Presentation/demonstration #3 via live stream
Home activity and break
- Closing Reflections on the program and closing prayer

4. Extended Programming (asynchronous)

Develop online programming to extend an event like Sunday worship (live streamed or in the church building), a church year season, an extended program (VBS, mission trip) into the daily lives of people. Design a webpage for the event and curate a variety of age-appropriate resources around the event: prayers, reflections/readings, video, podcast, art, music, creative activities, conversations, action ideas, and more.

5. Event-Centered Programming (both asynchronous and synchronous)

Utilize digital platforms and tools to prepare people for an event or program, such as the celebration of a sacrament or milestone (marriage, baptism) or participation in a mission trip. This is an especially helpful process when it is difficult to gather people for the preparation and/or follow-up. Design playlists on the website to *prepare* people for the event with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). *Engage* people in the event or program in a physical location (adhering to social gathering guidelines). Use the website to *sustain and apply* the learning and growth with appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). Use social media (like a Facebook group) to facilitate online interaction and discussion throughout the process.

#5. Design playlists of faith forming content and experiences for all ages to structure faith formation programming.

Faith Formation 2.0 is designed as online **Playlists** of curated content and experiences focusing on a particular theme or topic. A playlist weaves together these learning experiences into a sequenced pathway centered on a common theme. Playlists broaden opportunities to engage in cohesive, interest-driven connected learning experiences that combine a variety of settings for learning: online, peers, families, intergenerational, community, and world.

Playlists provide the learning path and are an essential ingredient in all five of the examples of online and blended programming above.

Playlists are designed with *micro-learning* experiences: short-form 5, 10, 15 minute learning experiences designed for anywhere, anytime learning that be combined into multi-part learning programs. We can curate a series of micro-learning experiences on a digital playlist to engage people in all types of faith formation content. Breaking content into small learning units, micro learning, will enhance comprehension and retention of knowledge, skills, and practices.

Playlists are designed with *multiple ways of learning* incorporating the eight multiple intelligences (see Howard Gardner) into learning experiences, providing a greater variety of ways for people to learn. While not every playlist can incorporate activities for all eight intelligences, having a greater variety of ways to learn promotes more effective learning and engages people more fully in the learning experience.

- verbal-linguistic (word smart, book smart)
- logical-mathematical (number smart, logic smart)
- visual-spatial (art smart, picture smart)
- bodily-kinesthetic (body smart, movement smart)
- musical-rhythmic (music smart, sound smart)
- naturalist (nature smart, environment smart)
- interpersonal (people smart, group smart)
- intrapersonal (self-smart, introspection smart).

Playlists are designed with *practice-oriented learning*, incorporating real-life application activities into the learning experience. Practice is a part of the learning process, not the result of it. Research is demonstrating that people learn more deeply when they apply knowledge to real-world problems and when they take part in projects that require sustained engagement and collaboration.

Playlists are designed with a *mix of methods and media*. Here is a list to illustrate the great variety of activities that can be included in a playlist.

- Reading short articles and stories
- Writing reflections or keeping journaling
- Storytelling and creating stories
- Viewing videos
- Listening to podcasts
- Creating a video or podcast
- Conversing with others (online chat, Facebook Groups)
- View and/or creating art
- Viewing and/or taking photographs
- Viewing and/or engaging in drama or writing a drama
- Viewing and/or conducting a demonstration
- Experiencing games and/or simulations
- Analyzing and/or creating a case study
- Viewing and/or creating an exhibit
- Experiencing and/or creating prayer and rituals
- Taking a field trip or tour (virtual or physical)
- Participating in a mission trip
- Engaging in and/or creating a service/action project
- Developing a mentor relationship
- Taking online quizzes
- Engaging in personalized skill practice with online resources

Playlists can utilize a variety of *learning apps* that provide easy ways to create interactive learning and engage participants in creating projects to demonstrate their learning. Here are examples by method. See the “Digital Learning Methods and Apps” at the end of this document for the descriptions and links to each app.

- For creating podcasts: Anchor
- For creating videos: Animoto, Clips, Flipgrid, Kapwing, Loom, Magisto, Typito, WeVideo
- For creating animated videos: PowToon, PuppetMaster
- For making a video into a lesson: Edpuzzle
- For creating publications: Book Creator
- For making animated GIFs: Brush Ninja
- For giving photos a voice by taking a picture: Chatterpix Kids
- For creating interactive lessons: Deck.Toys. Nearpod
- For creating multi-media blogs: Edublogs
- For creating presentations: Genially

- For creating multi-media posters: Glogster
- For creating scavenger hunts: GooseChase
- For drawing and animating: Green Screen by Do Ink
- For creating online binders: LiveBinders
- For engaging discussions: NowComment
- For creating boards, documents, and webpages: Padlet
- For creating digital stories: Pixie
- For creating digital stories using photos: PhotoPeach
- For creating digital flashcards and interactive games: Quizlet
- For creating immersive 360 tours: Tour Creator
- For creating playlists and newsletter: Wakelet

Designing Playlists

There are at least two ways to design faith formation playlists: 1) a menu approach of faith forming activities on a topic or theme, and 2) a sequenced learning design on a topic. Select the approach that will work best with your goals and target audience. First we will look at how to use your existing curriculum and program resources.

For curated lists of digital faith formation resources that can be used to create playlists go to the **Curate** section on www.LifelongFaith.com.

Transforming Your Current Curriculum Resources, Texts, and Programs into Playlists

Most churches do not need to start from scratch to create playlists. You already own curriculum resources, textbooks, and programs that can be transformed into playlists for age groups and whole families. Curriculum resources for children and adolescents already use a learning process designed in an educational program to be taught in a physical location. The task is to translate these sessions into online playlists.

Use the lesson plans or program designs you already have and create online playlists for at-home, small group, and/or self-directed online learning sessions (in a menu or sequenced approach). Publish these playlists on a website or use a learning platform like Edmodo. Add video conferencing or live streaming presentations to add a synchronous component to the program design. Create a Facebook Group or other group sharing app for interaction and discussion. Review all of the digital tools, methods, media, and learning apps already presented to assist you.

Approach #1. A Menu of Faith Formation Activities on a Topic or Theme.

In the **Menu** approach activities and experiences are organized by categories, such as Learn, Read, Watch, Listen, Participate, Pray, Live. People are given a variety of options for faith formation in each category from which they can select activities. You might want to include how long each activity will take.

Playlist for Adult Bible Study

Here is an example of a Bible study playlist on the Gospel of Luke that offers a variety of ways to explore the Gospel. This template can be applied to other books of the Bible, and to most themes or topics. Each of the offerings would include a description of the activity and a link to activity (if it is not included within the playlist).

Read

- Learn about the Gospel of Luke at *Enter the Bible*: outline, background, introductory issues, and theological themes (<https://www.enterthebible.org/newtestament.aspx?rid=4>)
- Read *Luke: Everyone Bible Study Guides* by N.T. Wright (IVP Connect)

Watch

- Explore the Gospel of Luke in a five-part, animated video series from The Bible Project (<https://bibleproject.com/explore/gospel-series>)
- Watch the *Gospel of Luke* movie on Netflix – word-for-word Bible texts of the entire book of Luke are narrated and re-enacted in this epic production of the Gospel's accounts of Jesus's life. (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81035749>)

Participate

- Join an 8-session online Bible study of “The Gospel of Luke” on *Yale Bible Study* with Dr. David L Bartlett and Dr. Allen R. Hilton (<https://yalebiblestudy.org/courses/the-gospel-of-mark>)

Listen

- Listen to the audio program “How to Read and Understand the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles” by Fr. William L. Burton, O.F.M., SSL, STD (<https://www.learn25.com/product/how-to-read-and-understand-the-gospel-of-luke-and-the-acts-of-the-apostles>)

Pray and Reflect

- *50 Day Bible Challenge: A Journey with Luke* by Marek P. Zabriskie. Join the journey with Luke with fifty days of scripture readings, meditations, and prayers written by dynamic spiritual leaders from around the world. (<https://www.forwardmovement.org/Products/2399/a-journey-with--luke.aspx>)

Playlist for a Church Season at Home

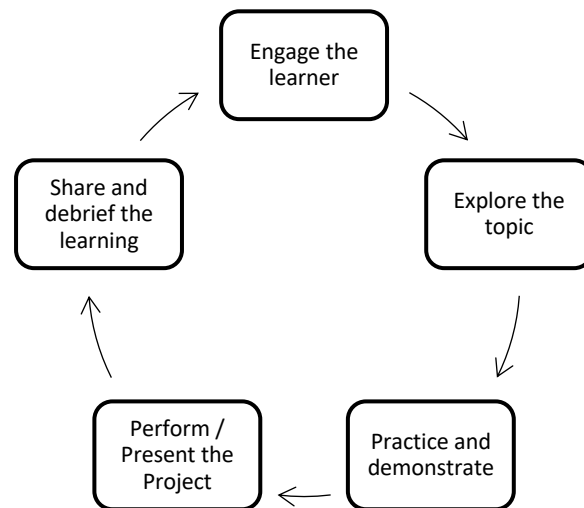
Here is an example of a Playlist for children and parents for Lent. The activities can be organized into categories like the adult Bible study example. Each year there are dozens of free activities produced for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy, Easter, Pentecost, and more that you can use. Each activity would be described with links to the activities (if not included on the web page).

- Video: “Lent in 3 Minutes” introduction to Lent video (rom Busted Halo)
- Video: Ash Wednesday and Lent from Chuck Knows Church videos
- Daily Lenten prayers
- Daily Scripture readings

- Lenten calendar with short activities for each
- Ash Wednesday service at home
- Lenten service projects: at home, at church, in the community and world
- Daily devotional for Lent for children and for adults/parents
- Video commentary for each Sunday Gospel reading in Lent
- Creative activities for each Sunday of Lent and Holy Week (like
- Weekly symbol and ritual activity
- Rituals: Stations of the Cross
- Children's storybooks on the themes of each Sunday's lectionary readings from Storypath (<http://storypath.upsem.edu>)

Approach #2. Sequenced Learning on a Topic or Theme.

In the **Sequenced** approach a learning process structures the faith formation experiences and activities. Sequenced playlists include synchronous and asynchronous activities. A simple process for learning, based on the 4MAT learning cycle developed by Dr. Bernice McCarthy has four movements: 1) engage the learner in the topic or theme, 2) explore the topic of theme, 3) practice and demonstrate learning, and 4) perform/present the project. (See <https://aboutlearning.com>.)



Playlist Design

Here is an example of a playlist design for all ages that includes synchronous and asynchronous activities. It is designed as a four-session mini-course (though it would be easy to make this six sessions) on a particular theme or topic. It could easily be re-designed into an asynchronous playlist, especially after the live session in week one is video recorded. It also provides a way to use your curriculum resources and programming in a playlist format. The sequenced learning process can be used effectively with all five of the examples of online and blended programming describe in #4 above.

Week 1. Engage the learner in the topic or theme (synchronous)

Begin the playlist with a synchronous live streamed session (on Zoom or Facebook Live or YouTube Live) to “gather” the group, introduce the topic/theme, and show how it connects to the life of the learner. One or more methods can be used, e.g., a combination of presentation, demonstration, video, storytelling, and even participant contributions if you use Zoom.

Week 2. Explore the topic of theme (asynchronous)

Learners select one or more activities that go deeper into the topic or theme. This can take many forms (video, audio, text, reading, prayer or ritual, etc.)

Week 3. Practice and demonstrate learning (asynchronous)

Learners use a variety of methods to create an activity, individually or with others in the group, that demonstrate learning. The learning apps (listed previously) can provide a creative way to design an activity.

Week 4. Perform and present the project (synchronous)

The conclusion of the mini-course engages the learners in presenting what they have created to demonstrate their learning (using Zoom or Google Meet).

Design a Playlist Using the Four Movements

The following questions are intended as a guide for designing the four movements of the learning process.

1. Engage the Learner

The question to be answered is “Why?” Why is this of value to me? Why do I sense the need to know this? This is something that intrigues them (a problem to solve), or connects to them (a situation that has real meaning in their lives), or touches them in a way that links to their faith or spirituality.

- What will you do to get your learners excited about the content of the session?
- What experience will you create that will inspire them to learn what you’re about to teach?
- What discussion techniques will you use to give learners the opportunity to share what just happened in the experience you created?

2. Explore the Topic

The question to be answered is “What?” What is out there to be known? What do the experts know about this? What is the nature of the knowledge I am pursuing?

- What is the key content for the session?
- How you will teach or engage the learner with the content?

3. Practice and Demonstrate

The question to be answered is “How?” How will this be of use in my life? This is where learners take the learning and do something with it, something that has meaning for them. This is where relevance is demonstrated.

- How will you determine if the learners understood the content?
- What kind of practice is involved?
- Where does your concept exist in life? Where is it useful?
- Can you give learners an opportunity to interpret material, and adapt it to their lives and unique perspectives?
- What will they do to show and use their new understandings and skills? Choose projects or performance requirements that are meaningful and useful in real life.

4. Perform and Present

The question to be answered is “What If?” If I use this in my own way, what will happen? What can I create and how will that creation expand, enhance, and maybe even transform the world I know? The word “per-form” means to form through and that is the essence of this step. It represents the merging of the learning and the learner.

- What will the learners be able to do that they can’t do now?
- How will they synthesize the learning?
- How will learners explain or perform their work?
- What procedures will you put in place for feedback and mentoring?

Dr. Bernice McCarthy emphasizes that knowledge must be used. It must operate in one’s life. And because all human beings are unique, we use and then integrate learning in our own inimitable, incomparable ways. What we learn is transformed into a particular use, a distinct way of doing, a matchless refinement of a method, a unique understanding. It is transformed. It becomes for us. It is in the transformation that real understanding happens.

Examples of Methods for Each Stage of the Process

The following methods are suggested for each movement of the learning process. Not all methods will apply to online faith formation using a playlist. The list of methods and media, and of learning apps listed previously can also be used to design each step of the learning process.

1. Engage the Learner: Why do learners need to know this?

- Actual case studies
- Stories (audio, video, illustrated)
- Personal storytelling
- Direct experience, like a field trip
- Simulated experience or game
- TV-style game show
- Interactive dialogue
- Personal reflection/journal
- Feature film segment
- Media presentation: images and music
- Dramatic presentations
- Personal reflection tool/worksheet
- Quiz
- Self-assessment or inventory

- Prayer or ritual experience
- Witness presentations

2. Explore the Topic: What is it that we are teaching (or engaging) the learners?

- Video presentation
- Audio presentation
- PowerPoint presentation with content and images/music
- Guided reading and research
- Interviewing experts
- Demonstration
- Prayer or ritual experience
- Panel presentation
- Study groups: read and analyze/reflect on selecting readings, and present findings in a small group or to the large group
- Debate
- Inquiry-oriented discussion

3. Practice and Demonstrate: How will the learners use it in their lives?

- Case study demonstrating how to use the information
- Practice activities and exercises
- Mentoring
- Role play / skill practice
- Field work
- Simulations
- Demonstrations
- Panel presentations
- Compare and contrast activities
- Creative writing activity
- Creative activity: art project, song/music video, video, drama

4. Perform and Present: What will the learners become and do as a result of the learning experience?

- Conduct a demonstration
- Write a report, article, or story describing performance to share with others
- Create action plans
- Create a photo or video documentary of practice
- Field trip or action project
- Participate in a church ministry
- Keep a journal of performance efforts
- Get involved in an action learning project (service project, teaching others, leading an activity).

Conclusion

A Guide to Transforming Faith Formation for a New World seeks to provide guidance in answering the question: *How do you plan faith formation on an ice age brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic?*

I don't believe we are ever going back to normal. We need to design **Faith Formation 2.0** that builds a more resilient, flexible, and adaptable form of faith formation with age groups, families, and the whole community (intergenerational) in response to the new conditions of the post-Covid-19 world.

I propose five important building blocks for designing Faith Formation 2.0. More building blocks were surfaces as we move into the future, but these five provide a starting point for building faith formation into the future.

1. Focus on goals for faith maturing in faith at each stage of life and design programming to address the goals.
2. Integrate three faith forming environments: intergenerational community, family, and age or peer group in all programming.
3. Design faith formation in three seasonal menus of programming.
4. Design faith formation using online and blended approaches, eventually incorporating programming in physical settings when conditions allow.
5. Design playlists of faith forming content and experiences for all ages to structure faith formation programming.

This Guide is Version 1.0. As our knowledge and practice grows I will be creating new versions to capture our learning. For more information, resources, and tools, please go to:

Lifelong Faith: www.LifelongFaith.com

Vibrant Faith Catalyst: <https://vibrant-faith-catalyst.mn.co>

Works Cited

Campbell, Heidi. "Distancing Religion Online: Lessons from the Pandemic Prompted Religious Move Online." *Contending Modernities*, May 4, 2020. Accessed at

<https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/global-currents/distancing-religion-online-lessons-from-the-pandemic-prompted-religious-move-online>

Crouch, Andy, Kurt Keilhacker, and Dave Blanchard. "Leading Beyond the Blizzard." *The Praxis Journal*, March 20, 2020. Accessed at: <https://journal.praxislabs.org/leading-beyond-the-blizzard-why-every-organization-is-now-a-startup-b7f32fb278ff>

Larson, Mimi. "How Your Children's Ministry Can Emerge Stronger and Better After COVID-19." *The Network*, May 20, 2020. Accessed at: <https://crc-resources.platform.rapidg.net/childrens-ministry/how-your-children's-ministry-can-emerge-stronger-and-better-after-covid-19>

McCarthy, Bernice and Dennis McCarthy. *Teaching Around the 4MAT Cycle—Designing Instructive for Diverse Learners with Diverse Learning Styles*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006.

McCarthy, Bernice and Jeannine O'Neill-Blackwell. *Hold On You Lost Me—Using Learning Styles to Create Training that Sticks*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006.

Digital Tools for Faith Formation

You will need a few digital tools to make online programming effective. You don't need expensive or complex technology to implement online faith formation. Here are a few essentials:

- **Website:** Create special pages on your church's website or create a special website for online faith formation. One of the easiest tools for creating a website for online programming is to use a website builder. There are three very good options: Weebly (<https://www.weebly.com>), Wix (www.wix.com) and Squarespace (<https://www.squarespace.com>). Purchase the website builder plan (no need for e-commerce). Weebly is probably the easiest of the three website builders. All three services will host your website and provide a free domain name. There are tutorials available for all three.
- **Video Conferencing & Streaming:** Zoom (<https://zoom.us>) provides is an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems. You can use Zoom to live stream worship, programs, presentations, etc. You can use Zoom to organize online interactive classes, small group studies (Bible study online), and much more. Google Meet (<https://meet.google.com>) provides many similar features. [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube Live](#) provides an excellent ways to live stream worship, events, and presentations. All three allow you to record the event for future use.
- **Online Learning Platform (Learning Management System):** An online "classroom" provides an environment for sharing content, texts, videos, projects and assignments with people online. It is an environment where teachers/leaders can guide learning and where they can interact with participants in a safe space. A learning platform is essential for online-only and blended models of faith formation. Edmodo (<https://new.edmodo.com>) is a free platform for individual teachers/leaders and classes, as is Google Classroom (<https://edu.google.com>).
- **Facebook Group:** [Facebook Groups](#) provides an online interactive environment for online programs and blended programs that you can add to all programming. You can organize groups for adults to discuss the Sunday Scripture readings or to share insights from an online Bible study or theology course. You can organize groups for parents to share their family experiences with the Bible story of the week or prayer practice. And much more.
- **E-Newsletter:** Create a weekly e-newsletter to communicate the faith formation activities and schedule for the week or month. There three very good online email services: MailChimp (<https://mailchimp.com>), Constant Contact (<https://www.constantcontact.com>), and Flocknote (<https://flocknote.com>). The three services are very similar (Flocknote adds texting) so review the prices and features. Check into non-profit discounts.
- **Texting:** Use texting to send reminders, links to activities on the faith formation website, and short activities (prayer, Bible verse, etc.). There are a variety of texting apps (free) that you can use with iOS and Android. Check out GroupMe – app and web-based interface

(<https://groupme.com/en-US>), Telegram—app and web-based interface (<https://telegram.org>), WhatsApp (<https://www.whatsapp.com>), and Viber (<https://www.viber.com>).

- **Social Media:** Facebook and Instagram, to name two of the more popular social media platforms, provide excellent ways to communicate and share faith forming content, and to invite people to share what they are learning and doing through videos, images, and text. A YouTube channel also provides a great to communicate and share content. A real advantage of using these tools is that people already have the apps on their mobile devices.

For more information about **Digital Tools**, go to the **Tools** section on www.LifelongFaith.com.

Digital Learning Methods & Apps

The following digital tools have been selected because of their ability to be used in learning and faith formation. They include websites and apps, and often both formats. Most are free or have a low cost subscription. The American Association of School Librarians does a yearly review of the best websites, tools, and resources for teaching and learning. Check out the ALA website at: www.ala.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/best-websites and <http://www.ala.org/aasl/awards/best>.

Anchor: For creating high quality podcasts with a free and easy to use creation tools and hosting service that includes a variety of sound effects and audio clips. (<https://anchor.fm>)

Animoto: For creating videos from your photos, video clips, music, and text. (<http://animoto.com> and <https://animoto.com/business/education>)

Book Creator: For engaging in the real-world application of online publishing by creating and publishing fiction, non-fiction, comic books, picture books, how-to guides, and more. (<https://bookcreator.com/>)

Brush Ninja: For making animated GIFs (elementary and up). (<https://brush.ninja>)

Chatterpix Kids: For giving photos a voice by taking a picture, drawing a line to make a mouth and recording your voice. (<http://www.duckduckmoose.com/educational-iphone-itouch-apps-for-kids/chatterpix>)

Clips: For turning your iPhone into a video production studio by creating and editing dynamic videos with the ability to add subtitles, animated stickers, filters, and music, all within the app. (<https://www.apple.com/clips>)

Deck.Toys: For creating interactive lessons with paths and activities for students to follow. (<https://deck.toys>)

Edpuzzle: For making any video your lesson by finding a video, adding questions, and assign it to the group, a great resource for the flipped classroom (<https://edpuzzle.com>)

Edublogs: For creating multi-media blogs that include videos, photos and podcasts—all in safe, easy, and secure environment. (<https://edublogs.org>)

Flipgrid: For engaging and empowering every voice in a class or at home by recording and sharing short, awesome videos (<https://info.flipgrid.com>)

Genially: For creating presentations, infographics, video presentations, resumes, and more with templates with access to photos, animations, and illustrations giving the user the ability to make any image or text interactive (grades: 6-8). (<https://www.genial.ly>)

Glogster: For creating online multi-media posters that combine images, graphics, audio, video and text on one digital canvas. (<http://edu.glogster.com>)

- GooseChase:** For creating and facilitating scavenger hunts with mobile technology to create exciting learning (elementary+). (<https://www.goosechase.com>)
- Green Screen by Do Ink:** For making it easy to animate and draw, and to create incredible green screen videos and photos by combining images from multiple sources into a single video. (<http://www.doink.com>)
- LiveBinders:** For creating online binders with digital content: websites, audio, video, and text (<http://www.livebinders.com/welcome/education>)
- Kapwing:** For creating everything from video montages and memes, to stop action videos and sound effects (grades 4 and up). (<https://www.kapwing.com>)
- Loom:** For creating screencast and webcam video creation of presentations, how-to videos, and more. (grades 4 and up). (<https://www.loom.com>)
- Magisto:** For creating polished short videos from photos and video clips using a smart video editor to create a video story. (<https://www.magisto.com>)
- Nearpod:** For creating interactive lessons in a 1:1 setting by easily importing existing lessons (pdfs, jpegs, ppts) and adding interactive features such as virtual field trips, 3D objects, quizzes, polls, open ended questions, etc. (<https://nearpod.com>)
- NowComment:** For having rich, engaging discussions in both large and small groups that allows people to converse about documents, videos, and images (grades: 5 and up). (<https://nowcomment.com>)
- Padlet:** For creating beautiful boards, documents, and webpages that are easy to read and fun to contribute to. (<https://padlet.com>)
- Pixie:** For creating digital stories, nonfiction pages, comics or podcasts with little instruction using an authoring to share ideas, imagination, and understanding through a combination of text, original artwork, voice narration, and images. (<https://www.tech4learning.com/pixie>)
- PhotoPeach:** For creating digital storytelling using photos, music, and more in a slideshow. (<https://photopeach.com>)
- PowToon:** For creating animated videos and presentations, and converting a PowerPoint presentation into a video. (<https://www.powtoon.com> and <https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home>)
- PuppetMaster:** For creating animation that can bring to life any image, just by acting things out in front of the camera with voice recorded resulting in an animated video (preschool – middle school). (<https://www.shmonster.com/puppetmaster>)
- Quizlet:** For creating digital flashcards, and generating interactive games. (<https://quizlet.com>)

Stop Motion Studio: For creating stop action movies with a frame-by-frame editor, backgrounds, foregrounds, sound effects, paint brushes, and more. (<https://www.cateater.com>)

Tour Creator: For building immersive, 360 tours right from a computer with photos, points of interest, image overlays, boxes with informational text, and “did you know?” points of interest. (<https://arvr.google.com/tourcreator>)

Typito: For creating videos incorporating icons, shapes, photos, audio, and video files (grades 4 and up). (<https://typito.com/social>)

Wakelet: For creating playlists and newsletters by curating and creating stories with links, images, notes, titles, PDFs, YouTube and Vimeo videos, Tweets, Facebook and Instagram posts, Google or Dropbox Documents, Soundcloud tracks, Spotify playlists, Google Maps, Flipgrid responses. (<https://wakelet.com>)

WeVideo: For video creation, with a stock media library of videos, images, and music tracks. (<https://www.wevideo.com>)

For more information about **Digital Learning Methods and Apps** go to the **Tools** section on www.LifelongFaith.com.